

New caucus will work to advance clean energy technology

Washington, DC - U.S. Reps. Jay Inslee (D-Wash.) and Steve Israel (D-N.Y.) today announced the formation of the Sustainable Energy and Environment Coalition (SEEC), a focused, action-based caucus in the U.S. House of Representatives. The group recently met with Assistant to the President Carol Browner to discuss energy and climate policy. Additionally, the SEEC has been working to strengthen green technology provisions in the American Economic Recovery and Reinvestment Plan.

“The 111th Congress convened in a perfect storm,” said Inslee, a member of the Energy and Commerce Committee and the Natural Resources Committee. “The melting of the Arctic ice cap is speeding up toward a point of no return and the economy is in turmoil. We are in need of bold, aggressive action, and that’s exactly what the Sustainable Energy and Environment Coalition is about.”

“This year, we have a historic opportunity to finally reduce our dependence on foreign oil,” said Israel, a member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water. “The Sustainable Energy and Environment Coalition will lead efforts in the House to create the incentives and make the investments we need to transform our economy, our infrastructure, and our environment.”

Inslee and Israel are the co-chairs of the SEEC, whose stated purpose is “to advance policies that promote clean energy technology innovation and domestic manufacturing, develop renewable energy resources, create green collar jobs throughout the product supply-chain, help arrest global warming and protect our nation’s clean air, water and natural environment.”

The SEEC already has thirty-five founding members, a strong show of initial support in a session of Congress that will be a turning point in climate and energy policy. The 2009 vice-chairs for the SEEC are:

- Rep. Paul Tonko (D-N.Y.), Vice-Chair for Speakers;
- Rep. Peter Welch (D-Vt.), Vice-Chair for Outreach;
- Reps. Jim Langevin (D-R.I.) and Paul Hodes (D-N.H.), Vice-Chairs for Membership; and
- Rep. Jared Polis (D-Colo.), Vice-Chair Whip.

The 2010 vice-chairs will be Rep. Chellie Pingree (D-Maine), Vice-Chair for Speakers; Rep. Paul Hodes (D-N.H.), Vice-Chair for Outreach; Rep. David Loebsack (D-Iowa), Vice-Chair for Membership; and Rep. Niki Tsongas (D-Mass.), Vice-Chair Whip. The coalition will operate like the Blue Dogs or the New Democrats – and also work with these and other groups on common goals – in that it will assertively push to advance its legislative agenda in talks with House leadership and other groups within Congress.

The SEEC formed at the end of the 110th Congress when Inslee and Israel called a meeting

for like-minded members of Congress to discuss how they could impact the 2008 House energy and economic recovery bills. In the 2008 and 2009 economic recovery packages, the group successfully inserted provisions for the federal support of advanced-battery manufacturers.

The Coalition will be working with House leadership, the White House, and other groups in Congress to advance their energy priorities.